

THE CLEVELAND MUSEUM OF ART

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"Nevelson: Wood Sculptures," an exhibition surveying the stylistic development of Louise Nevelson's wood sculpture over the last three decades, opens January 29, 1975 and will continue through March 9 at the Cleveland Museum of Art.

Sixty-six works drawn from museum and private collections are included in the exhibition, among them numerous examples of the landscapes, columns, reliefs, boxes, and walls which have been Nevelson's primary themes since the 1950s.

The most dramatic and space filling of the works are the walls, large-scale environmental sculptures consisting of complex arrangements of boxes and columns which average nine feet high and vary from six to 18 feet in width. There are four of these sculptures in the exhibition: Sky Cathedral Presence (1951-64), Mirror Image I (1969), and City Reflection (1972), each painted entirely black; and New Continent (1962), painted white.

"Whether she is working on the monumental scale of the walls, or on the intimate scale of the 'cryptics,' Louise Nevelson displays enormous imaginative power, transforming the most ordinary objects -- scraps of lumber, torn bits of wood, architectural fragments, pieces of crating -- into rare and fascinating landscapes, mysterious totems, exotic architectural compositions," says Edward B. Henning, Curator of Modern Art at the Cleveland Museum.

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Born in Russia in 1900, Louise Nevelson came with her family to Rockland, Maine in 1905. Her father ran a lumber yard and was a builder.

"To build, to use bits and scraps of wood, and to be intensely aware of every nuance of nature -- all were part of her childhood experience," Mr. Henning adds.

At the age of 21 she married, and moved to New York, studying painting at the Art Students League and later with Hans Hofmann in Munich. Still a painter, she assisted Diego Rivera on WPA mural projects, then turned increasingly to sculpture.

Her early works, from the 1930s through the mid-1940s, were small semi-abstract pieces based upon human and animal themes, and carved, usually out of stone.

During the mid-1950s, Nevelson had given up carving for construction -- assembling random pieces of wood to form figure-like columns, or creating mysterious dark landscapes and skyscapes on flat backgrounds, or in boxes.

The landscapes, descending from prototypes executed as early as 1943, are arrangements of familiar wooden objects, such as duck decoys and cable spools, juxtaposed with abstract forms and mounted on flat, heavy bases.

Her boxes, sometimes hinged to open at the top or at the front, are containers that reflect their crate origins, while the columns derived from the integration of wood-crate pedestals into the sculptures themselves. Their forms evoke towers, spires, and tree trunks, and bear names such as Young Trees, Rain Forest Columns and Night Column.

Nevelson's walls began as the most dramatic elements of her environmental exhibitions in the late 1950s. Later, during the 1960s, they were constructed to stand as objects in themselves.

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"Nevelson: Wood Sculptures" has been organized by the Walker Art Center of Minneapolis, and has been exhibited at the San Francisco Museum of Art, the Dallas Museum of Fine Arts, the High Museum of Art in Atlanta, and the William Rockhill Nelson Gallery of Art in Kansas City.

It has been installed in the special exhibitions gallery on the first floor of the Cleveland Museum. There will be an admission charge of \$1.00 for adults, and 50 cents for students and children. Museum members are admitted free.

A series of daily gallery talks has been scheduled in conjunction with the exhibition. These will be held at 1:30 p.m. January 29 through February 4, supplementing the two talks planned for 1:30 p.m. February 5 and February 9.

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